



Closure of library toilets: more than just an inconvenience

By Daphne Chamberlain

The proposed closure of East Finchley Library's public toilets when the building is unstaffed is concerning a lot of people. People who are already apprehensive about using an unstaffed library are telling us that it makes them feel even more discouraged.

Some children, pregnant women, and people with disabilities or medical conditions will obviously be affected. But you don't need to fall into one of these categories to feel that not offering toilet facilities to users of a public building for 69 of its 85 opening hours is very wrong.

Fear of flooding or damage is one reason Barnet Council is giving for locking the toilets. They say: "Many libraries control access, keeping them locked until required."

In buildings where there is no public toilet, there is usually a member of staff who can exercise discretion and allow use of staff facilities. However, in an unstaffed library this will

not be possible, and can surely be taken as another reason for having staff available.

Barnet Council also told us that, as CCTV cameras can obviously not be installed within the toilets, inappropriate behaviour, illness or injury could not be identified. But you could argue that this would always be the case and a camera could reasonably be stationed strategically near the toilet entrance.

It's interesting to see that there is an acknowledgement in Barnet's Options Appraisal for the Future of Libraries that not all branches are within easy reach of a public toilet. The nearest to East Finchley Library is in Cherry Tree Wood!

"Listen to us, don't lock us out!"

By Emily Burnham

Children at Martin Primary School wrote postcards addressed to the Culture Secretary Karen Bradley on World Book Day to explain how much East Finchley Library means to them and their families.

Youngsters from reception through to year six drew and wrote their stories about the impact of Barnet Council's imminent cuts to staffed opening hours. Holy Trinity School has announced that it will also be joining the postcard project. "I hope the Culture Secretary will see from the children's point of view how much this means to us. I hope they will realise what a terrible decision they have made and how it will affect Martin Primary children," said Harry, a



School Council representative in year five at Martin Primary. School librarian Saadia Qamar Ali explained: "We discussed with the children what the library meant to them in their own lives, including access to

books and learning, as well as having the social interaction within this community space. It was clearly something that meant a lot to them, with the library on their doorstep: it is such an important local issue."



National Book Day protests against library closures in East Finchley. Photo Mike Coles

Library system is failing us

By Katie Nyarko

The UK's first free public library started lending books in 1852. Sadly, in 2017, libraries across the country are shutting down at a terrifying rate and many others are suffering cuts due to funding pressures.

In East Finchley, we are just about to experience cuts in staff and opening hours and loss of library space. As if this wasn't enough, there will be new fines on children's books, most around 5p per day if the book is not returned or renewed.

The number of five to 15-year-olds visiting libraries has already dropped since 2008. Why would the government want to discourage them further from reading? In East Finchley and across Barnet only those with a library card and PIN number are allowed even to enter. Children are not allowed in unaccompanied during self-service opening hours and libraries are closed to the public between certain times.

Here's an example of how the changes at East Finchley library will affect me when it reopens in August. I will no longer be able to visit it after school, except on Wednesdays. The only other time I can visit is before 12.30pm on a Saturday morning when, like most other students, I pursue various activities.

The recent introduction of fines for children's overdue books will prevent me from using the library at all, as I can return books only once a week on a Wednesday after school. Instead of a peaceful retreat in which to read and learn, the library has become a 'members only' consortium.

And why wasn't the closure for restructuring work scheduled to start after the exam period, rather than during the summer term when many students are revising? It would appear that children's learning isn't a priority to our local councils.

What's next? Will libraries

shut down altogether, leaving bookshops and eBooks the only way of obtaining the numerous benefits of reading? Or will they charge a membership fee, leaving the underprivileged out in the cold, with almost no way of rising above their present situation? Reading is learning, and now that the government is discouraging reading, could they be discouraging education.

Children's protest at library

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"I need staff who can help me."

There was support for professional library staff, trained to help and interact with the public, and now largely redeployed by Barnet. Many adults are apprehensive about being deprived of human contact and assistance. More vulnerable library users tell us they are frankly frightened of being in a locked building, dependent only on CCTV cameras.

spending £14 million to save £2.2 million

SBL told us they challenged Cllr Reuben Thompstone, who was quoted as saying that the entire procedure of setting up the new regime will cost £7million. They maintain that Barnet's own documentation is estimating more than £14million but received no response. So *The Archer* asked Cllr Thompstone the same question.

The answer we received was that setting up the procedure would fall within £7million. The figure of £14million in Barnet's procurement document covers the potential for library construction, including acquiring space for new building.

It's worth how much?

Here is another chance to bring along your family heirlooms and jewellery and leave with a spring in your step and a wide smile.

Finchley WI is holding another of its popular Antiques Valuation Days on Sunday 9 April from 10am to 3pm at Stephens House and Gardens, 17 East End Road, N3. They ask that you bring up to three items for valuation, but leave the furniture at home!

In return for your £10 donation you will be supporting local charities. The regular

WI Cake and Crafts stall will be there and you will be able to book Sunday lunch with Stephens House directly via their online contact form at www.stephenshouseandgardens.com or by telephone on 020 8346 7812.

Finchley WI meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 8pm at Stephens House and Gardens.

East Finchley Baptist Church

Just off the High Road in Creighton Avenue N2

Sunday Mornings at 10.30 am

Crèche and Sunday School during service
Wheelchair access

For more information please contact the Church Office
Tel: 8883 1544 (Minister: Simon Dyke)
www.eastfinchleybc.org.uk

Visitors always welcome



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- Neck Pain
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- Sciatica
- Sports Injury
- Frozen Shoulder
- Arthritis
- Tennis Elbow
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- Neurological
- Stroke

Wendy Longworth & Associates physiotherapy practice offers a variety of treatments at the clinic, or off-site, in patients homes, nursing homes, private hospitals and other organisations.

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